MEMORANDUM FROM THE EMORY COLLEGE HUMANITIES COUNCIL REGARDING THE EVALUATION OF DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP

ADOPTED NOVEMBER 2013

The Humanities Council — comprised of chairs and directors of departments and programs in the humanities — recognizes the significance of digital scholarship in the humanities, and affirms the importance of assessing this scholarship fairly and carefully in decisions of faculty tenure and promotion. The precise questions asked in any tenure and promotion process are specific both to the candidate and to his or her field. However, the Humanities Council believes that the following general principles should prevail during the review process:

As in all cases with the evaluation of research, the most significant criterion in the evaluation of digital scholarship should be the contribution that the scholarship makes to its field of research. Does the scholarship advance an original research question or approach? Will it have a significant impact on a community (or communities) of scholars? These questions pertain regardless of the form or method of scholarship.

In the case of digital scholarship, the Humanities Council understands the necessity of evaluating works in their native formats; it also understands the importance of receiving evaluations from scholars who can produce informed judgments about the contributions of the scholarship. This may require that the College secure, in consultation with the department and the candidate, some external reviewers who are not located in the same department as the candidate.

In cases where digital scholarship is the result of extensive collaboration, departments will work with candidates to understand the extent and nature of the collaboration, and may invite research collaborators to write letters about the history of collaboration for the review file.

In evaluating digital scholarship, departments will attempt to ascertain the relationship between design, content, and medium. Departments will ask appropriate scholars about the compatibility of the work with prevailing technical standards, about the accessibility of the scholarship, and about the viability of long-term preservation. The nature of these questions may depend on the extent to which the scholarship has an online publishing and/or archival dimension. Departments will also seek evidence about the sustainability of the research program.

Emory College has a history of evaluating new, emerging, and interdisciplinary forms of scholarship with both rigor and fairness, and the Humanities Council believes that the College’s existing practices of review can accommodate new forms of digital scholarship as well. Thus, this memo does not supersede or in any way change the standards or practices articulated in the “Statement of Principles Used for Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure in Emory College of Arts and Sciences.”